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PSYCHE AT NATURE'S MIRROR

BY PAUL THUMANN

EROS AND PSYCHE

A FAIRY-TALE OF ANCIENT GREECE

RETOLD AFTER APULEIUS
BY
PAUL CARUS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PAUL THUMANN

79579

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PREFACE.

THE story of Eros and Psyche reflects the religious life of classic antiquity more strongly than any other book, poem, or epic, not excepting the works of Hesiod and Homer. The *Theogony* of Hesiod tells of the origin of the gods and invests them with definite shape; Homer introduces them as actors in his grand epics; but the popular tale of Eros and Psyche reflects the sentiment with which the gods were regarded, and describes the attitude of man toward the problems of life, especially that problem of problems—the mystery of death and the fate of the soul in the unknown beyond.

The orthodox Greek religion consisted in the performance of certain rites, which were administered by the priests in the name of the state for the public benefit. Neither faith nor morality was required; the sole thing of importance was to accord to the gods their due, according to established tradition, and thus to fulfil the duties men owe to the invisible powers, upon whose beneficence their welfare depends. But the performance of sacrifices and other ceremonies left

the heart empty; they were conducted in a perfunctory way by persons duly selected according to descent or station in life and were kept up simply from fear that some deity might be offended by the neglect. The people, however, demanded the satisfaction of the religious cravings of the heart, and this resulted in the origination of a new religious movement based on the new thoughts imported from Thrace, Egypt, Chaldæa, Phœnicia, and Syria, and finding at last definite expression in the mysteries and secret teachings of Orpheus, Dionysos, and other deities.

THE EROS OF PRAXITELES.
Torso found in Centocelle; now in the Vatican. (After Springer, *Hdb. der Kunstgeschichte*, I., 181, cf. Baumeister, *Denkm. d. cl. Alterth.*, 497.)

These innovations were not revolutionary. New gods, it is true, were introduced, but the old ones remained in power. Dionysos entered into an alliance with Demeter, Apollo, and Zeus. The ancient harvest festivals were not abolished, but enriched with ceremonial processions and symbolic rites of new significance. Thus the change was not in name, but in interpretation. As such, however, it was none the less radical, for

the very nature of the old gods underwent a thorough transformation, and their religious significance was greatly deepened.

SLEEPING EROS.
Lateran Museum. Monument on a child's tomb. (Garrucci, plate 40, 1.)

Nor is it difficult—in spite of the mystery that surrounds them and the silence preserved concerning their rituals—to describe (at least in general outlines)

THE MARRIAGE-FEAST OF EROS AND PSYCHE.
Ancient sarcophagus. (After Combe, *Ancient Marbles in the British Museum*, Vol. V., plate 9, 3.)

the character of these innovations, for they became the dominant factors in the formation of the Greek type in its classic period and left an unmistakable imprint upon philosophers and poets as well as upon

the public life of ancient Hellas. The great problem of Greek thought was the riddle of the sphinx, finding its solution in the Greek conception of man's soul as worked out by Plato. The mysteries themselves were a mixture of ancient traditions set in relief by the modern Greek thought of the days of Peisistratos and later of Pericles; and traces of antiquated folk-lore were thus displayed in the light of the greatest wisdom of the age.

EROS AND PSYCHE.
Antique marble group now in the museum of the Capitol at Rome.

That Plato and his doctrines affected Christianity is well known, and so we may, in the evolution of religion, regard the hopes and dreams of the mysteries, especially the Eleusinian mysteries, as one of the most important phases in the transition to Christianity.

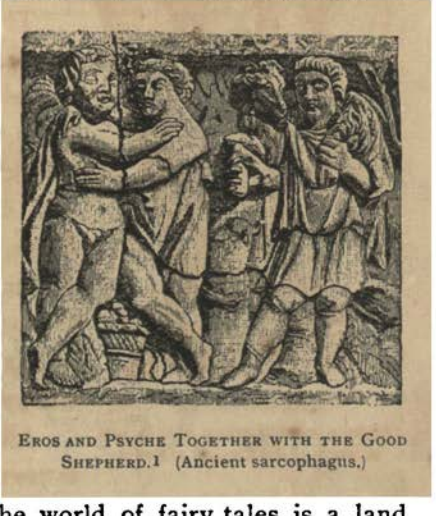
All these views found expression in the fairy tale of Eros and Psyche—the only fairy tale of ancient Greece that has come down to us; and it is not an accident that Eros and Psyche should have appeared

both on a Mithras gem and on a Christian sarcophagus, side by side with the Good Shepherd.

The tale of Eros and Psyche bears all the marks of a genuine *Märchen*, and the main outline of the story must be supposed to date back to prehistoric ages.

MITHRAISTIC GEM.
Mithras slaying the bull. On the reverse Eros and Psyche (broken).

All genuine fairy tales are old and reflect a civilisation that has now passed away. Among the Teutonic races the tales of Snowwhite, of the Stupid Hans or Simpleton, of Little Red Ridinghood, of Cinderella, of Dame Holle etc., have been somewhat changed, especially through the influence of Christianity, yet their most characteristic and original features have not been obliterated, but faithfully preserved. The world of fairy tales is a land of forests and of country life. The wayfarer meets



EROS AND PSYCHE TOGETHER WITH THE GOOD SHEPHERD.[1] (Ancient sarcophagus.)

[1] Kraus, *Geschichte der christlichen Kunst*, I., p. 102.

EROS AND ANTEROS.
Relief in the Palace Colonna, Rome. Braun, *Ant. Marmorwerke*, 5a.

giants, robbers, and other dangers. It is the age of matriarchy in which the wise old woman is a great, perhaps the greatest, power in the community, and kinship through the mother alone is recognised. Never a son inherits the kingdom; it is always the daughter; and the hero of the tale becomes king by marrying a princess. This feature is still preserved

EROS BETWEEN ELPIS AND NEMESIS.
Hope holds a flower and Destiny a branch.

in the *Odyssey*, where Telemachus is not considered an heir to the throne of Ithaca, but it is taken for granted that that person will become king who marries Penelope, the queen. The oldest version of Cinderella[1] is preserved in the Norse fairy tale of the

[1] See Prof. Karl Pearson's instructive article on the subject in his splendid book *The Chances of Death and Other Studies in*

Ash-Lad, a male Cinderella, who like the stupid Hans goes out to seek his fortune and finds it through his marriage with a princess.

Being mirrors of a prehistoric age, fairy tales reflect also the religion of our remote ancestors, and this is most prominent in the story of Eros and Psyche. We can plainly recognise in all folklore tales a belief in immortality, which is obscured only by the utter

PSYCHE TORTURED AND RELIEVED BY CUPIDS.[1]
Nemesis standing behind and Hope pointing to the cupid hovering above.

absence of a line of division between the land of the dead and the living. The dead return to life as if they belonged there, and no further particulars being given, we might be led to think that they continue in

Evolution, Vol. II. pp. 51–91, published by Edward Arnold, London, 37 Bedford St., and New York, 70 Fifth Avenue.

[1] Fresco from Pompeii. Reproduced from Zahn, *Ornam. u. Gemälde aus Pompeii*, II., pl. 62.

life as before; but as a rule there is nothing to prevent us from assuming that they give only an account of their fate after their departure.

The story of Dame Holle is quite instructive; the good girl of the story loses her spindle in the well, and being afraid of punishment, jumps after it to put an end to her misery. Now she is in the country of Dame Holle, who is none other than the mother goddess that controls the weather and provides mankind with food. She makes the apples grow and presides over the bread-baking. The good girl serves her faithfully and is rewarded by being all covered with gold, and whenever she speaks, a gold piece falls out of her mouth. Now the bad girl goes down to Dame Holle, but she suffers the bread to burn and the apples to rot, and proving herself lazy and indolent in everything, is punished by being covered with pitch, and whenever she speaks a toad jumps out of her mouth.

PSYCHE CHID BY VENUS.
Capitol, Rome. (After Clarac, pl. 654.)

In this fairy tale, as in many other instances, the goddess of the earth is at the same time mistress of

the realm of the dead, which is assumed to be under ground, in the depths of the earth.

The world of the departed is frequently depicted as the land beyond the river, and a little nursery rhyme suggests the idea that the river has no other shore:

> "Gray goose and gander, waft your wings together,
> And carry the good king's daughter over the one-strand river." [1]

As the rhyme reads now, it has become unintelligible. But it appears that that power in nature which mates goose and gander is indispensable for crossing the one-strand river. The king's daughter is a Northern Psyche crossing the Styx.

An English version of the story of Eros and Psyche is preserved in the tale of Beauty and the Beast, and the religious element is most obvious in both. The connexion in which Death stands to Love in these stories of ages long past is full of deep thought and suggests the idea that Death, which appears as a monster, a beast, a terror, is after all a friendly power, a kind friend, a blessing. The interrelation that obtains between birth and death was felt by primitive man perhaps more keenly than by later generations. The aged, the crippled, the weary of life go to rest, but so long as love prevails mankind does not die out, and the human soul reappears in renewed beauty and vigor.

[1] See *Book of Nursery Rhymes*, Methuen & Co., 36 Essex Street, Strand, W. C. London, 1897, page 89.

This observation of the close interrelation between death and love is the central idea of the story of Eros and Psyche, which, judging from the monuments, was very popular in ancient Greece, but has been preserved only in the version of Apuleius, as told in his romance, *The Golden Ass.*

In the best days of Greek art, Eros is always represented as a youth of about twenty, but when love

EROS IN THE UNDERWORLD.[1]
Votive terra-cotta tablet from South Italy.

degenerated into childish frivolities, artists began to picture him as a child, and now whole families of Eroses, mostly called by their Latin name, Cupids or

[1] The powers of the Underworld, called the Chthonian gods, are closely related to the deities of life and reproduction. Thus both Eros and Aphrodite are sometimes represented in their Chthonian significance. The votive tablet here reproduced from Lewis Richard Farnell, M. A., *The Cults of the Greek States,*

Amors, have been introduced into art; the most beautiful humorous representation of this style being a relief by Thorwaldsen after classical models, entitled "The Sale of Cupids," where these winged mischief-mongers are conceived in the spirit of the Anacreontic poetry.

The redactor of the story of Eros and Psyche, as here retold, has brought out the religious and philosophical *Leitmotiv* with more emphasis than it pos-

THE SALE OF THE CUPIDS.
Frieze by Thorwaldsen.

sesses in the tale of Apuleius. By obliterating the flippant tone in which their satirical author frequently indulges, and by adding a few touches where the real significance of the narrative lies, he believes that he

II., pl. XLVIII., p. 697, shows Hermes in his capacity as psychopompos or leader of souls through the valley of death. He is confronted by a woman holding in her outstretched hand the blossom of a pomegranate, the symbol of death. Between them stands a phallus, and on the woman's arm hovers an Eros with a pomegranate on a branch in his hand. The woman may be the person that presented the votive tablet or a goddess of the Underworld, either Persephone or a Chthonian Aphrodite.

has remained faithful to the spirit of the ancient *Märchen*, and thereby succeeded in setting in relief the serious nature of the story and the religious comfort that underlies this most exquisite production of human fiction.

The best illustrations of the story of Eros and Psyche, Greek in conception and purely classical in execution, were made by Paul Thumann, and published for the first time by Adolf Titze, a publisher of Leipsic, who is justly famous for his high-class illustrations of classical poetry.

Bent on offering to the public the best that could be had, we were fortunate enough to acquire the right to use this valuable series of pictures, from both the artist and the publisher, to whom our acknowledgments are due for their courteous compliance with our wishes.

PAUL CARUS.

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A RIVAL OF APHRODITE.

IN the days when the Olympian gods still governed the world, there lived a king and a queen who had three beautiful daughters. The elder two, Megalometis and Baskania, were exceeding fair, but the youngest, whose name was Psyche, so much surpassed her sisters in beauty that human language seemed too poor to express worthily her charms; for, indeed, Nature had exhausted upon this sweet maiden all her treasures of grace and loveliness.

Psyche was remarkably demure and modest. She loved and worshipped Artemis, the tutelary deity of virgins, but shunned the gay festivals of Venus Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty.

Once when upon some special occasion the three princesses were expected to appear in

public as priestesses of Aphrodite, Psyche refused to accept the honor and thereby gave offence to the goddess; but her parents reproached her for neglecting the duties of religion and persuaded her at last, though not

without great difficulty, to fulfil the office and serve the deity of beauty in the temple according to the established rites of pious usage.

When at the appointed moment Psyche stepped forth to the altar in the presence of a great multitude, she looked so beautiful in

her maiden coyness, that the people gazed at her in wonder and forgot all else on her account. They were so enraptured with the sight that they cried out "Here is Beauty incarnate! Here is the living Aphrodite! Here is the true goddess of love!" and strewing flowers in her path they stood before her in awe and worshipped the maiden as though she had been Venus Aphrodite herself.

The fame of Psyche's beauty spread rapidly throughout the surrounding countries, and the legend became current that Venus Aphrodite had appeared in the flesh and was walking visibly in the society of mortals.

The temples at Paphos, Cnidus, and even at Cythera, stood deserted. The statues of Aphrodite no longer received their due honors, and her altars were covered with cold ashes. Every one who wanted to pay homage or offer prayer to the goddess of Love and Beauty now addressed himself to Psyche and adored in the lovely princess the ideal of womanhood.

Seeing the honors of divine worship so profusely showered upon a mortal maiden,

Aphrodite became incensed and said to herself in indignation: "Shall I, the divine mother of the universe, the origin and source of all things, yield my place and honors to a miserable mortal maiden? Shall my holy name be profaned by being attributed to a woman of

human parentage only because she is supposed to bear my image? Shall I surrender the golden apple, the prize for the fairest, to a daughter of earth endowed with a beauty that is fading? Never! Be she radiant as the rising sun or noble in descent as the scions of the most ancient royal houses, she shall not

enjoy the fruits of her assumption, and I will take care that she shall soon curse her criminal pretensions."

Brooding on vengeance, Aphrodite came

up from the sea and called her son, Eros; she greeted the winged wanton youth with motherly tenderness, and said: "Go down, my boy, to the city which I shall point out to thee, where thou wilt find in the royal palace

a princess by the name of Psyche. The infatuated creature dares to vie with thy mother, and has become a rival of my beauty. I conjure thee, let me have full revenge. Seize thy bow and arrows, aim at her heart, make her the slave of an unworthy love, and when the giddy girl inconsiderately sacrifices her honor and self-respect, she will by her own foolishness speedily ruin her beauty, and degrade her dignity. One who dares to rival the gods must be prepared to pass through the severest ordeals and to go down to the realm of death in misery and wretchedness."

Eros departed in the direction of the royal palace of Psyche's parents. His eyes beamed with mischief when he descended into the orchard, hiding in the branches of an apple-tree, like a hunter who deems it wise first to study the habits of his game; and a smile of satisfaction passed over the face of Aphrodite when she saw how readily and gladly her son complied with her request.

Aphrodite saw the winged sportsman disappear at a distance and then took her way over the ocean. Mermaids, the daughters of

Nereus, accompanied her; dolphins drew her conch-chariot through the waves, and a host of Tritons surrounded the glorious spectacle, leaping up from the billows and frolicking in joyous intoxication. One of them held up to the goddess a mirror, some made music by sounding sea shells, others spread a frothy web against the sun, and all were delighted to behold the divine beauty which is the source of all existence and the benign mother of the world.

THE SACRIFICE.

PSYCHE, in the meantime, did not enjoy the glory of her charms. The people admired and praised her, but there was none who dared to seek her in marriage; and had there been one bold enough to woo her, the suitor would scarcely have been worthy of her hand and would have proved unacceptable to the princess. Her older sisters had been wedded to kings, and were happily married, but she remained at home like a widow, bewailing her fate and hating the very beauty which was the cause of her misery. The king, her father, fearing that the gods were angry with his daughter, inquired at Delphi of Apollo and received the following oracle:

"Lead this most lovable maiden
Away to the top of a mountain.

Let her appear as a bride,
Ready to enter the tomb.

"Chant hymeneals and dirges;
Her groom is that terrible tyrant
Whose jurisdiction extends
Both to the heavens and hell.

"Do not ye dare disobey,
But trusting submit to the mandate.
Joy shall be mingled with gloom,
For your bereavement bodes bliss."

When the oracle became known, the whole country was overcome with grief. Above all, the king and the queen lamented the sad fate of their daughter, but Psyche with calm composure said to her parents: "What is the use of your weeping and wailing? This is the penalty for my beauty. When all the people called me the fairest of the fair, and worshipped me as Aphrodite, the goddess of love, then was the time for lamenting. Attend now to the ceremony without further ado, and remember that there is only one Aphrodite, one divine mother of all things, who by right deserves the honor of being worshipped as the eternal standard of beauty. I am resigned,

and will welcome the awful spouse whom destiny has chosen for me."

Being unable to resist the will of the gods, the wretched parents prepared the maiden for the funeral marriage. The nuptial torch was lit, but it had no light for the princess, only

dismal fire and smoke; the hymeneal hymn was chanted, but its tune was changed into a mournful dirge. The princess was dressed in costly garments and decked with choice flowers, but behind her bridal veil she wept bitter tears.

Psyche was led out of the city to the top of a high mountain. The priests performed the ceremony in sadness and the people lamented the pitiful lot that had befallen her. When all rites had been duly performed, the multitude of friends and sympathisers who had accompanied the doomed maiden returned to the city. Only her parents lingered for a while longer with their unfortunate daughter, but at last they too departed and Psyche cried out: "Fare ye well, and let me find comfort in the thought that ye will moderate your grief. Remember that my name is a prophecy: it links my destiny with invisible but strong ties to the fate of the dainty butterfly. A grovelling grub entombs herself as a chrysalis in the cocoon whence she comes forth a being of celestial beauty, whose body seems to consist of pure ether and rainbow colors, a winged flower, a living parable of profound sentiment and a fitting emblem of the human soul."

THE WONDERFUL PALACE.

PSYCHE remained alone on the mountain top in gloomy loneliness. Overcome with the heat of the day, and breaking down under the fatigue of the excitement of parting, she fell asleep. Having regained some strength, she felt a cool breeze fanning her burning brow. It was Zephyr, the mild evening wind, who, at the behest of Eros, approached the dreaming princess, and gently lifting her up carried her down over the craggy rocks and the winding streamlets of the mountain-side to a flowery meadow in the valley below.

When the maiden awoke she was surprised to find herself lying on the turf amid fragrant herbs, near a grove. A babbling brook as clear as crystal meandered through the valley, and where its limpid waters rushed over the

rocks in a melodious cataract, there she saw looming up before her a grand palace, wonderful in its structure and noble in its decorations. Refreshed in body and soul, she

ascended the steps which led up to the mysterious building and passed through the stately portal.

The enraptured maiden felt as if she were

dreaming. What elegant halls and chambers! The columns were of gold, the walls of solid silver inlaid with enamelled pictures and curiously wrought in various hues. Psyche's eyes wandered in bewilderment from the mosaic of the pavement to the exquisite designs of the ceiling and then again to the statues and vases that embellished the niches. On all the things that presented themselves to the intruder's timid gaze there rested a heart-gladdening repose that made the house a fit place for the communion of gods with men.

While Psyche was still lost in admiration, she heard a voice which said: "Welcome, beautiful bride, welcome to thy home; thou shalt be the mistress of this mansion which thy husband has provided for thee!"

The astonished maiden looked around, but she saw no one. The air was filled with fragrance, and the words sounded like music, but the speaker was invisible and seemed to hover near her, quite near in bodiless presence.

"Who art thou?" asked Psyche.

"It is thy husband that greets thee," was the reply.

"Whosoever thou mayst be," rejoined the maiden, almost breathless in surprise and suspense, "wilt thou not show thyself to thy bride that I may see thee face to face? I was told that the husband whom fate has assigned me is a terrible tyrant, a superhuman monster whom the celestials fear no less than do the inhabitants of hell. Show thyself as thou art and do not assume a more pleasing shape than thy real nature warrants."

"Dearest bride," replied the voice, "be satisfied with my love and have confidence in thy husband. An unalterable decree renders it necessary for me to hide my face, but at night when utter darkness surrounds us I shall be with thee and thou shalt feel my presence. Then thou thyself shalt judge whether I am truly such a monster as thou didst fear. But now let thy cares vanish and allow my servants to minister unto thee."

Psyche now inspected the palace and its extensive grounds. The invisible servants explained to her the significance of the pictures and other treasures. If she could only see her companions! But they were like air,

and when she tried to seize them they eluded her and escaped like birds.

Having strolled through the meadows and the park surrounding the palace, Psyche re-

freshed herself with a bath; and when she sat down at a table, a banquet with rare dishes was served by invisible hands. But when the night drew near, she retired to an elegant chamber and secured the door behind her.

Although celestial music resounded over her couch, she became conscious of her loneliness and began to weep, for she thought of her parents and sisters and the friends she should

never meet again. But soon she fell asleep, and sweet dreams refreshed her soul.

Suddenly Psyche was awakened by the touch of a warm hand and a kiss on her lips. She shuddered in fearful expectation of an

unknown danger. But a sweet voice, the very same that had accosted her at her entrance into the palace, comforted her in her distress, saying: "Fear not! though the darkness of night surround thee, I am with thee! My love shall protect thee. Shouldst thou pass through the gate of death thou wilt be guarded by the spell of my thoughts. I sustain thee and cherish thee. Even if thou goest down to hell, thou shalt not perish. Thou art mine, O thou soul of my being; and I am thine—I that am love, I that am the delight of the world, I that am the giver of life."

A thrill of joy passed through Psyche's soul. She opened her arms, and when she closed them she embraced the tender form of a youth in the bloom of life. And as she felt his sweet breath on her cheek she trembled with rapture, and cried out, "Who art thou, and how is it that thou takest pity on me, the outcast who have been doomed to die as a sacrifice on the altar of the most terrible monster among the demons of hell?"

"Fear not that monster of whom the oracle spoke," said the youth in a low whisper,

"for I am he, I am the demon whom the inhabitants of heaven fear as much as do the denizens of hell. I am thy husband and thou art my bride."

"Why then," rejoined Psyche, "if thou truly art Death, the fearful ruler in the land of shades, whom even the mighty Zeus dreads, why dost thou come to me in so pleasing a disguise? Thy voice is music, thy breath the perfume of roses, and the touch of thy lips transports my soul. What shall I call thee, thou sweet dissembler?"

"Call me Love," said the voice, "for that I am!"

While thus Psyche pledged her troth to the husband who offered her his love, a choir of invisible spirits sang the hymneal hymn:

"O Love and Death, O Death and Love,
How wondrous kin ye are!
The planet Venus thus at once
Is evening and morning star!

"O Love and Death, O Death and Love,
Life ended, Life begun.
The sun may rise, the sun may set,
'Tis still the self-same sun.

"Life's problem here at last is solved.
Step in; the door's ajar.
O Love and Death, O Death and Love,
How wondrous kin ye are!"

LONGINGS.

PSYCHE lived happily with her unknown husband and would have remained contented had not the incertitude regarding her

husband's person disquieted her mind. During the day she was entertained in every possible manner by the tame birds and animals that peopled the groves, as well as by the in-

visible servants that ministered unto her and anticipated even her most secret desires; and in the night her husband visited her, unseen and unknown, yet kind and loving, and always merry and buoyant.

What a pleasure his company was, how entertaining his conversation! Sometimes his thoughts were lofty and inspiring; sometimes frolicksome and even wanton. Now his words were deep, like Plato's philosophy, and now they were jocund and full of mirth. Was it possible that so many contradictions could be united in one man?

Psyche asked in vain for an explanation of the mystery; he evaded all questions and at last bade her no longer be disturbed by doubt but to trust him implicitly, for, he added, "Inquisitiveness threatens thee with danger. Either I am the deadly monster, as the oracle called me, and then thou must take me as I am; or that grim fiend is after all not so terrible as people imagine."

So long as her husband stayed with her, Psyche was satisfied with her lot, for he laughed all her sorrows away and made her

forget all anxiety; but when he was gone, she felt desolate and the diversions offered by her invisible servants gradually grew stale and monotonous. Incertitude seemed worse to her than positive knowledge of the worst. Under these conditions, the young bride became homesick and longed to have some news from

her parents and sisters and friends who lived in the wide wheat-covered plains beyond the mountain. She began to frequent the most retired places where she took delight in giving herself up to melancholy thoughts.

In the meantime Psyche's parents were disconsolate in their bereavement. Their

youngest child had been dearer to them than their own life; and now, seeking for a moderation of their grief, they sent for their two eldest daughters to come and gladden their afflicted hearts.

These two princesses, who had become queens in distant countries, were dearly beloved by their husbands, both of whom were powerful kings; and seeing how little their parents were comforted by their presence, they grew jealous of their younger sister, even though they deemed her in the clutches of Death, the all-devouring monster, king of the infernal regions.

Psyche, being a dutiful child, inquired frequently of her lover about the fate of her parents, and he was glad to bring her the good tidings of the arrival of the two queens. But the news only added new fuel to the flame of discontent that was burning in the bosom of the banished princess, who became now exceedingly anxious to see her sisters and, if possible, to talk with them.

Psyche's consort grew very serious, saying: "I will do for thee whatever I can; and

will allow thee to see thy sisters who will reappear at the monument that has been built on the mountain-top in commemoration of thy departure from the world of men; but I advise thee not to talk with them, because it may bring disaster to thee and me, and will certainly cause much tribulation, for thine intercourse with the world threatens to destroy forever the happiness of our marriage. Venus Aphrodite, the great Goddess of Beauty and most powerful in the assemblage of the Olympians, is still a bitter enemy of thine. We must therefore keep our love secret; and it is best that even thou shouldst not know of the difficulties that beset the path of our connubial hopes. Aphrodite imagines now that thou art utterly undone. She planned thy ruin and destined thee to dire perdition, but I shall not let thee die in misery and if ever love can accomplish the miracle, I will make thee happy in spite of her enmity."

Psyche kissed her lover fervently; and he continued: "My servants shall do their best and I have taken care to surround thee with all the comfort that thou mayst desire." The

latter remark reminded Psyche of her loneliness in all her luxuries. She threw up her head and answered flippantly: "I hate this very comfort which thy ubiquitous servants procure for me. They are an insufferable annoyance and I would rather be rid of their meddlesome intrusion. I never know whether they are behind me or in front of me. They watch me like gaolers. I am a prisoner here; nothing but a prisoner. What is the use of a gilded cage if the captive bird is forever cut off from his former companions?"

The maiden began to sob and would not listen to any remonstrance or explanation. She accused her husband of tyranny until finally he yielded to her entreaties and promised that she should receive a visit from her sisters. "But," added he, "be on thy guard, and do not allow any one to come between thee and me or induce thee to pry into the secret of my personality. Nothing worse could befall thee, for if thou shouldst prove disobedient to this behest of mine, thine indiscretion might separate us forever."

Psyche promised everything, saying: "I

would rather surrender all the comforts which I enjoy through thy beneficence and even suffer death than be deprived of thy company, my beloved husband, my lord and my love."

When her invisible consort left her at dawn of day, Psyche was elated with the idea that she should soon see her sisters and be able to send a message of comfort to her dear mourning parents.

INTRIGUES.

MEGALOMETIS and Baskania had betaken themselves to the mountain-top and deposited a beautiful wreath of flowers on their sister's monument, when Psyche bade Zephyr bring them down to the palace in the valley. The two sisters felt as if they were being precipitated into a deep abyss; they grew dizzy, but when their feet were again placed on solid soil they were astonished at the marvellous change in their surroundings. What a magnificent building rose before their eyes, and there between the marble columns stood Psyche! "Sisters," she cried, "why do you mourn for me? Behold I am happy and know no pain, no misery, no cares. Follow me into my palace and rejoice with me in my good fortune."

With these words she embraced her sisters

and urged them to enter. "You must see my new home," she added, "and tell my parents that I am alive and happy. It will assuage their grief, for they will then know that there is no cause for mourning."

The young bride, proud of her husband's power and munificence, showed her visitors through the halls and corridors of the palace resplendent with luxury and comfort. Her guests had difficulty in concealing their envy, for though both were queens and in possession of great wealth they had never in their lives

seen the like in grandeur and costliness and beauty. At last Baskania asked Psyche about her husband. "Could we not meet him and see him? For our parents will be anxious to know what manner of man he is, and how he happens to be in possession of all this wealth."

Psyche apologised for her husband's absence, and when requested to describe his appearance she remembered his injunctions and evaded telling her sisters that she herself neither knew who he was nor had as yet even seen him face to face. So she invented a story and said that her consort was young and good-looking, that he was a great lord of large estates and a passionate hunter. Most of the time he spent roaming through the mountains and was frequently late in coming home.

When the two sisters had returned on the wings of Zephyr to their parents' estates and were still walking together on the road from the mountain to the royal palace, they began to gossip about the things they had seen, and Psyche was sharply censured. Said Megalometis: "There you see how blind Fortune is!

She showers her gifts upon this foolish girl who has neither desert nor merit to speak of and is not even pretty. Her beauty is only skin-deep and will fade away with the bloom of early youth."

"Pretty she is," replied Baskania, "but as silly as a goose. Even at school she was slow and acquired no accomplishments whatever. But she will soon come to grief if we

can only meet her husband and open his eyes to her shortcomings."

When the next night the mysterious husband visited his lovely wife, he gave her warning not to trust her sisters, as they were scheming against her. "My beloved bride," said he entreatingly, "do not see these wicked women again. Thou art no match for them with their plottings and wilt be easily decoyed."

Psyche, however, was deaf to her lover's warnings. She deemed herself safe, and retorted: "Did I not guard our secret with care and have I not artfully concealed the sad truth that I know absolutely nothing about thee? I wonder what they would have thought of a husband's whimsical wish to remain invisible to the eyes of his loving wife?"

"How unconscious thou art of the danger which threatens us," replied Psyche's consort; "but I warn thee again to be on thy guard, not only for my sake, nor for the sake of thine own happiness, but also on account of the child that some day thou shalt bear me. Should thy sisters finally succeed in rousing

thy inquisitive desire to discover my identity, I should have to leave thee; for it is beyond my power to oppose the wrath of the celestials."

DOUBTS AND ANXIETIES.

AGAIN the two sisters came to the monument on the mountain-top, and unmindful of her husband's warning Psyche had them conveyed to her palace on the wings of Zephyr. What a pleasure it was to talk of olden times! But the young bride remained unconscious of the evil designs of her malicious visitors, who cunningly concealed their envy by false caresses and the pretense of sisterly love. Soon the conversation touched upon the point which was the sore spot in Psyche's life,—the personality of her husband. That he was no ordinary mortal was apparent; for whence could come that supernatural wealth with which Psyche was surrounded! The question was only whether he was a god or a demon: one of the Olympians or a monster from the infernal regions.

"How is it possible," asked Megalometis, "that your husband can have his mansion furnished with the products of so many strange lands? There is ivory from India and amber from the shores of the Baltic, not to speak of the treasures of Egypt and of Greece!"

"O," said Psyche, "do you not know that my husband is a wealthy merchant and has spent more than twenty years travelling in foreign countries?"

"How interesting!" exclaimed the false sister, in well simulated surprise. "Then he must be a man of large experience, wise and sedate, and cannot be a mere boy as I have always pictured him"—adding jestingly—"a mere youth, young and indiscreet, such as you are, my sweet little innocent!"

Psyche smiled. Not suspecting a snare beneath this apparently good-natured taunt, she replied: "Yes, my husband is now in the very prime of life." And thinking that it would be better not to idealise him too much, she continued: "His hair even shows occasional streaks of grey!"

In her unwariness, Psyche had forgotten her former description, and now when she contradicted herself, the two queens glanced significantly at each other and began to follow up the advantage they had gained.

"I wish," said the elder sister, "I could suppress these insurgent suspicions of my soul. I fear, I fear"—therewith she began to weep and sob and could speak no further.

"What alarms you?" inquired Psyche.

"O, nothing, nothing," replied the sister, "I only thought, . . .; but I had better keep my thoughts to myself."

"Nay," said the young bride full of apprehension, "speak out; I want to know what you think. It is better for me to learn your suspicions; they will put me on my guard."

After many entreaties, the sister at last exclaimed earnestly: "My dear, dear sister! I love you so much, and I fear you are not happy. It may be an unnecessary anxiety of mine, but there is some dreadful secret about your husband which makes me tremble for your safety. You are under a terrible ban

and you conceal the truth from your own sisters. Love has keen eyes, and do you not think that our love penetrates through the veil which you draw over the mystery of your husband's personality? You called him a youth yesterday, now you speak of him as in the prime of life. Oh! I do fear there is some truth in the gossip of the people who say that you are married to a most awful infant-devouring beast, a dragon, who betrays you by assuming a pleasing form and only bides his time till you bear a child, when he will devour the infant together with its mother."

Psyche stood aghast with consternation and now confessed to her sisters that she had never as yet seen the countenance of her husband. "None the less," she added, "the touch of his body is pleasant like that of a youth blooming in health and beauty." But the subtle sisters had an explanation for everything. "Dragons," they claimed, "change their shape, and the people say that a most appalling monster descends every night into the valley, leaving it again in the early morn-

ing. These frightful beasts cannot maintain their deceptions in the light of the day and assume their own proper form as soon as the first rays of the sun shine upon them."

"Now I see it all!" cried Psyche, heart-broken, "The oracle proclaimed the truth; and I ought to have known it from the beginning, for the gods speak no falsehoods. I am dreadfully betrayed. My husband takes good

care that I shall never feel tempted to look upon his face, and keeps me imprisoned like a caged bird. Oh, how miserable am I! What shall I do?"

"Do not lose heart so soon, my dear girl," said the sisters. "When dragons assume the guise of mortal men, they lose their strength and can most easily be vanquished. The beast that visits you is apparently enamoured of your beauty and suspects no danger at your hands. Here you have a chance of becoming the greatest heroine of Greece. He will come again as usual to beguile you with his false love, and when wearied by his long flight and intoxicated with your caresses, he succumbs to slumber, then you must unflinchingly and without hesitation slay him in his sleep. What glory awaits you, Psyche, through ridding the world of this pestiferous monster which makes so many mothers miserable by snatching away and devouring their infants!"

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

WHEN the two scheming sisters had left the palace, Psyche remained alone with her doubts and fears. Her soul was distracted, and her thoughts were like a turbulent sea. Now she was determined to slay the monster, and now she relented. Now she hated the beast that appeared to her in a pleasing disguise, and now her heart was overflowing with tender love for her bridegroom. What should she do? What was the truth? Oh! what would become of her in the end?

When night came, Psyche's invisible husband again repaired to the bridal chamber where the young couple were wont to retire for their night's rest. The young bride received her lover with suppressed fear. She seemed calm, but a storm of wild thoughts, of misgivings and doubts, of wavering re-

luctance and resolute determination, swept through her heart. She loathed the beast and yet loved the bridegroom; and how should she judge whether her mate was worthy of her love?

He was much concerned about the two sisters and asked whether Psyche had seen them during the day and how they had behaved. The poor girl did not conceal from him that she had received the two queens again and that they were very anxious about her fate. And why should they not be? Was it not sad for a woman not to know, nor to see, the man who would be the father of her children, and should not those who loved her be concerned about her fate? Psyche wept bitterly, urging that if her husband loved her he should show himself to her in his real form. She insisted that she could bear the worst, but must at last have certitude.

"The moment thou seest me, thy happiness will be ended," replied the mysterious youth. "Trust in me, and all will be well, but doubt will bring thee to the brink of perdition; yea, it may ruin thee." These words

of kindly warning were so convincing and the sound of her lover's voice so sweet and sincere, that Psyche yielded again to his embraces and resolved to confide in him implicitly. How could he be false to her? If he were, he would neither be so affectionate nor so confiding. There he lay fast asleep, while she (poor girl!) by reason of her disquieted state of mind remained awake.

Psyche was naturally demure and coy. Heretofore she had merely dared to clasp her hands round her consort's neck, but now her desire to know more about him made her touch his arm and his back, when suddenly she felt something weird—it was something strange, like feathers—certainly not human in form. A feeling that it must be something uncanny came over her. She was terror-stricken, and had not an overwhelming dread sealed her lips she would have shrieked aloud. She rose noiselessly and went out to search for a dagger and a lamp. With all her fears and presentiments she had ever preserved till now a glimmer of hope that her husband was human and kind and loving; but now she

knew (or at least was firmly convinced that she had good reason to think) that he was an unnatural beast of some terrible shape.

She lit the lamp and returned to the couch, where she expected to find the terrible dragon whose victim she had become.

Trembling with excitement, Psyche raised her hand armed with a sharp blade and ready to strike with all her might. Suddenly she paused, murmuring to herself: "I must strike him in some vital spot so as to kill him at the first blow,"—when behold! The rays of light disclosed to her sight that most beautiful youth—Eros, the god of love, with wings on his shoulders and bow and arrows lying at his side. She was overwhelmed with delight and raised the lamp over the fair sleeper when suddenly a portion of the hot oil dripping down scalded the right shoulder of Eros badly and wakened him.

"Psyche, Psyche!" exclaimed the fairest of the gods, "why didst thou betray my confidence? I must leave thee now and can no longer protect thee against the intrigues of thine enemies."

With these words Eros rose and flew into the air. Hesitating a moment, he hovered before the window to take a farewell look at his beautiful bride. Psyche seized the be-

loved fugitive and tried to hold him, but her strength gave out; and she would have fallen to the ground, had he not held her up, and, descending with his dear burden to the earth, tenderly laid the weeping maiden on the soft

turf of the meadow. Then he hied himself away, disappearing behind the clouds which just began to glow in the gold-red light of Eos, the goddess of the dawn.

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THE PUNISHMENT OF GUILT.

POOR Psyche wrung her hands in despair. Her first thought was to make a speedy end of her misery and so she ran to the river and threw herself into its waters. The water nymphs, however, took pity on her. Bearing up her body, they carried the gentle wife of Eros to the opposite shore. There on a rock sat Pan, the shepherds' god, playing his flute. Seeing the despair of the fair damsel, he came to the river bank and asked what he could do for her; and when she refused all help he said: "Poor girl! You look as if you had been thwarted in love. Be not despondent, but implore the help of Eros; he will listen to your prayer and grant your secret wishes, for he is a friend of all lovers."

Psyche thanked Pan for his good advice, and whispering a prayer to Eros rushed away,

—up the mountain and down the mountain, over stony ledges, past crags and rocks, through narrow passes everywhere surrounded by a wilderness full of brambles and thistles

and thorns. The animals of the forest, the deer, the squirrels, and the birds of the air served her as guides. At last she reached the waving wheat fields on the farther side of the mountain, where the country was dotted with

the homes of men. She sought the palace of her aged father; but both her parents had died and she was now a lonely, helpless orphan. After a long and wearisome journey she arrived broken-hearted and footsore at the residence of her eldest sister, Megalometis.

Having asked for admission, Psyche was at once ushered into the presence of the Queen and related to her the story of her misfortune, saying: "I acted on the advice you gave me and was determined to slay the monster with a sharp knife, when behold, I saw by the light of my lamp that my husband was not a voracious beast, but Eros, the God of Love himself. I might still have escaped the evil fruits of my perversity had I at once extinguished the lamp and thrown away the dagger; but I was so enraptured with the sight that I could not help gazing at the beautiful features of the youthful god; and as I gave myself up to my ecstasy I carelessly allowed some hot oil to drip on his shoulder. He has now discarded me as unworthy of his love, and taken flight never to see me again."

. Megalometis pretended to be greatly agitated, but inwardly rejoiced and thought to herself: "Eros being disgusted with Psyche will look for another consort and will gladly select a sister of Psyche who is as beautiful as his first partner, but will be more prudent than this silly child."

Suppressing her secret satisfaction, she plied the unfortunate woman with cunning questions as to the interest which her lover had evinced in his sisters-in-law and became confirmed in her belief through the answers she received, that Eros had known of their plans and might have prevented the catastrophe if he had cared much for Psyche. Apparently he was ready for a new bride, and so she determined to approach him with vows of love. She dismissed Psyche, advising her to seek assistance at the home of her second sister, and began at once to erect a temple to be devoted to the god of lovers. But the old King, the husband of Megalometis, was extremely jealous, and surprising her once at the altar while praying for the requital of her passion, he grew angry and without waiting

for an explanation of her imprudent prayer, slew her on the spot.

Psyche was received with similar hypocritical kindness by Baskania, who secretly cherished the same hopes as her elder sister. She too felt confident that having rejected Psyche, Eros would gladly enter into a new alliance. And having not the slightest doubt that

through the extraordinary fascination which made her charms irresistible whenever she wished to captivate the fancy of a man, she would be acceptable to the young god, Baskania journeyed to the place where the monument had been erected in commemoration of Psyche's sacrifice, and ascending the rock she lay down exclaiming: "Receive me, Eros, a

wife worthy of thee; in me thou canst trust; I will never betray thee!"

When the breeze of the evening wind made her hair flutter, Baskania rose, and, standing close to the brink of the precipice, shouted: "Zephyr, be thou my messenger and carry me to thy master." She bounded into the air, as she had done before when about to visit Psyche, but this time the gentle Zephyr was not present to receive her, and she fell headlong from the mountain and perished miserably at the bottom of the abyss.

Such was the punishment which befell Psyche's wicked sisters, led to perdition by their own envy and evil intentions.

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THE CENSURE.

EROS, in the meantime, suffered unspeakable pain from the burn caused by the hot oil that had fallen upon his shoulder. He returned home, and, sick with fever, took to his couch lamenting and moaning. A sea-gull which had watched him in his flight, followed him stealthily, and peeping into the window of his chamber saw him stretched on the bed apparently ill and suffering great agony. The fleet bird returned to the sea and sent word through one of the daughters of Nereus to the mother of Eros, who was disporting herself in the depths of the ocean, that her son must have met with an accident, for he lay sick in bed, adding that his recovery seemed doubtful.

Aphrodite at once inquired of all creatures what they knew about her boy and how he might have been hurt, but her commiseration

changed into wrath when she heard of his secret love affair with Psyche. "Is it possible?" exclaimed the goddess. "This mischievous fellow has neither obedience nor filial piety. Did I not command him to take awful revenge on my rival and to ruin her by some unworthy passion? And now he selects her as his own paramour! He is not worthy to be my son and should no longer partake of the divinity which he has inherited from me, the great mother of life and the queen of animate existence!"

Aphrodite hurried home and began to berate her son with bitter words: "What a wayward and ungrateful child you are," said she, "and what a scandal there will be in Olympus! The rumor of your escapades is being bruited about and will soon be known to all the gods. You have made your mother ashamed of her son. And I suppose you were foolish enough to marry that stupid girl,—a mere mortal without dignity or discretion. What an ill-matched couple you would make! And are you not aware how I must feel at your making an enemy of mine my daughter-

in-law? Think of it! An earth-born woman to dare to come forth as my rival and aspire to be your wife! It will be a disgrace for you, for me, for the whole family of the gods. Do

you believe that I could ever give my consent to your union with Psyche?—No! I shall have you punished, and will see to it that Psyche shall find a place of eternal torment in the infernal regions."

Flushed with anger and slamming the door, she called Vulcan Hephæstos, her husband. "Please, look out for the boy lest he escape," she said imperiously, like a woman wont to compel the obedience of an humble and devoted husband. "Build at once for this wanton bird a big, strong cage with iron bars, for I will show to the world and to all the gods that my authority cannot so easily be set aside. *I* am the deity of love, not *he*. I shall yield neither to that upstart girl nor to this arrant knave, even though he be my own son!"

The god of the fiery forge muttered grumblingly between his teeth some words which might be taken for an indication of protest as well as of submission. His reply caused her to stop and turn on him rather sharply with the question: "What did you say?"

"O, nothing at all," said Hephæstos; "I was only thinking that I had never expected anything better of the boy. He is a villain and will ever remain one;" and he added in an undertone, careful not to be heard by his wife, who was beautiful even in her

anger: "Nor can he help it. He is born so; he is his mother's son."

At that moment Demeter and Hera entered and became unwilling witnesses of this little domestic squabble. But Aphrodite did not seem to mind their presence, for she at once explained the situation. "You come in season," she added; "help me to find and punish Psyche, for I must have my revenge!"

The two visitors tried to mollify the anger of their cousin and could not understand what grievous sin Eros had committed. They granted that it was a mortal offence for a human being to be a rival of one of the Olympian gods, and that Psyche deserved a severe humiliation. But that could be punished and had nothing to do with the love affair of Eros. "On the one hand is not the girl of royal blood," replied Demeter, "and is she not a good match for Eros? On the other hand, such a gallant little adventure is exactly the thing one would have expected of your son, who in every respect follows in the footsteps of his mother. When the apples are ripe,

they do not fall far away from the tree, and there is no reason to grow excited about it."

Aphrodite had difficulty to suppress her indignation and turned for support to Hera, the dignified wife of Zeus and Queen of Heaven. The latter did not quite share the views of Demeter, but neither did she countenance the opinion of Aphrodite. Though she had no excuse for the conduct of Eros, she pleaded Psyche's cause, saying: "Have not several mortals been received among the Olympians? Even I, the Queen of Heaven, had to allow Heracles to become one of us, and he was the son of a mortal woman, one of my rivals; but when I became convinced that he was worthy of the honor, I was glad to welcome him as one of the immortals and offered him with my own hands the nectar cup that endowed his person with everlasting life. My daughter Hebe, the goddess of eternal youth, has become his spouse and he will remain to mortal men for ever the paragon of human excellence."

THE QUEST.

PSYCHE continued her desolate journey, wandering hither and thither and resting neither night nor day in her search for Eros. If she could not regain the affections of her husband by proving to him her devotion, she was at least determined to propitiate him with the humble services of a handmaid.

While walking along the high road she saw a noble temple on the top of a mountain, and called out: "O that it might be the abode of my lover and lord!" And, attracted by the beauty of the building and its high columns, she wended her way toward its entrance.

The sanctum of the temple was decorated with wreaths of ears of wheat, and sheaves were placed here and there around the altar. There were sickles and other implements of

harvesting, but everything lay about in disorder, thrown down at random by the hands of the fatigued harvesters. Psyche at once began to arrange the emblems of rural industry in good order, and said within herself: "I must not neglect the shrines of the gods nor their holy service, for I might thereby gain mercy for myself and forgiveness of my failings."

It was a temple of Demeter, and when the goddess saw Psyche diligently attending to the task of a servant in the hall of the temple, she cried out: "Alas! Psyche, what are you doing? Venus Aphrodite is tracking your footsteps and means to wreak vengeance upon you for the offence which you have given her; and you, not thinking of your own safety, are working here in the temple and taking care of my paraphernalia!"

Psyche fell upon her knees and conjured the goddess to assist her in finding her beloved husband. "By the joyful harvest rites; by the mysteries of Eleusis, with its lighted lamps and solemn processions; by the sacred chests that conceal the symbolic utensils; by the

fiery chariot drawn by winged dragons; by the countenance of the awful Hades who snatched away thy daughter Persephone; by her marriage and descent into the infernal regions; by the hallowed earth that closed upon her and her abductor; by the joyous return of the goddess with torch-illumined processions; and by thy sacred sanctuary in Attica; by all the venerable traditions and the solemn silence that surrounds thy rites—I implore thee to succor the wretched Psyche and to look with compassion upon thy humble supplicant. Suffer me for a few days only to hide myself among the wheat sheaves, until the anger of the goddess who pursues me without cause has passed away, or at least is mitigated by the lapse of time. I am worn out by long travel, my feet are sore, my soul is weary, and I long to recover strength for continuing my search."

But the goddess of the golden harvest remained unmoved by the maiden's entreaties and bade her humble supplicant rise to her feet. "I should be glad to assist you," she said, "but I am powerless, for I should only

incur the hostility of a sister goddess, without rendering you any help. In fact, I am bound by the rules of the celestials to take you prisoner and hand you over to her wrath; and I make myself guilty of a breach of the estab-

lished etiquette in simply bidding you leave my temple and begone."

With these words Demeter turned her back, and Psyche left the temple. Her afflictions were now doubled. She not only longed for a reunion with her husband but also feared the anger of Aphrodite, one of the most power-

ful goddesses, and there was none to whom she might apply for help or protection.

She strayed down to the valley, and espied among the tall trees of a sacred grove another temple of magnificent structure. It was a temple of Hera, Queen of Heaven and wife of Zeus, the great father of all the gods and men. Hoping to receive consideration at the hands of her who claimed to be protectress of the dignity of wives and mothers, Psyche entered and beheld the noble offerings and embroidered garments hung round with votive inscriptions. She fell upon her knees and embracing the altar she addressed the great goddess in prayer: "O, consort of the mighty Father, whose power extends over all the world, O holy lady, who art adored as the Virgin Mother of the gods, Queen of Olympus, passing through the heavens in a chariot drawn by lions, thou mistress of the island of Samos and the fortified city of Argos on the banks of the Inachus, protectress of holy matrimony, listen to my prayer and consider my overwhelming misfortunes!"

The auspicious goddess at once appeared

in august majesty before the eyes of the supplicant and said: "Readily would I grant your prayer if I were not bound to respect the wishes of Aphrodite, my daughter-in-law, whom I love and cherish as my own child. I hope that fate will not overburden you in your distress, and that your trials may draw to a happy conclusion; but I cannot interfere and must leave you to your own destiny. Be steadfast and faithful and you will work out your own salvation."

Utterly dismayed by this new rebuff, Psyche decided to give up the attempt to find a place of refuge or to secure her own safety, and said to herself: "I cannot escape the wrath of Aphrodite, and it will be best to submit patiently and humbly to the penance which the goddess may impose upon me. I shall certainly not find my lost husband by searching the world, but I am quite likely to meet him again in the home of his mother. I will be resolute and approach my enemy and pursuer boldly. It is true she hates me, but is she not at the same time the mother of him whom I love with a devotion that knows no

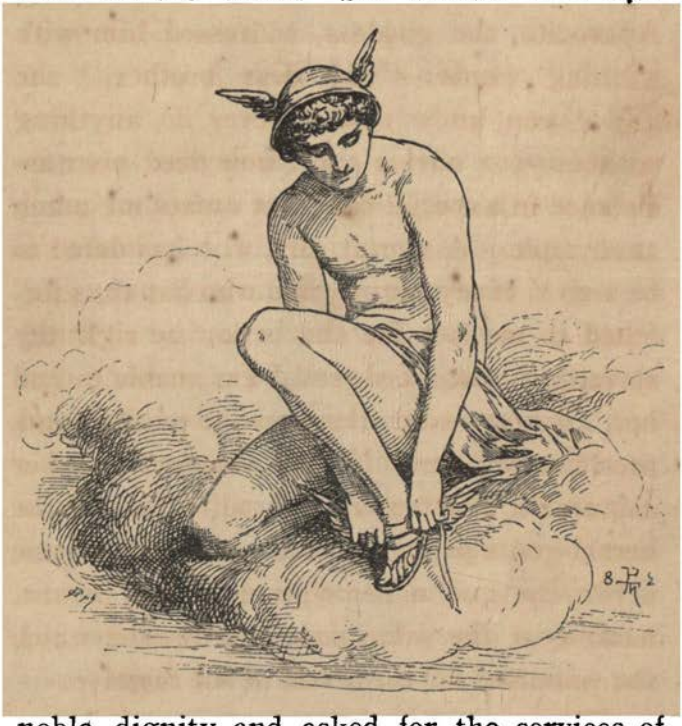
bounds? It may be my own destruction, but there is no other chance left. If I am doomed I shall prefer to die willingly and courageously. Better bleed to death as a willing sacrifice on the altar of the gods than be hunted down like a wounded doe in the chase."

SUBMISSION.

AFTER a vain pursuit of Psyche throughout the cities of Greece and other countries, Aphrodite returned to her home in Heaven. She rode in a chariot of pure gold which Hephæstos, her husband, had skilfully wrought for her in the shape of a shell, as a wedding present, rendering the precious metal more precious by chiselling away a part of it and giving it a beautiful form. Four white doves of the flock that nestled under the eaves of her celestial mansion were hitched to the beam and drew it onward with wondrous ease. Riotous sparrows fluttered round their mistress, noisily chattering and proclaiming the approach of the great goddess, whose train passed gracefully through the sky like a roseate cloudlet.

Soon the ether opened before the eyes of

the goddess and, having reached the summit of Mount Olympus, Aphrodite approached the throne of Zeus, the mighty thunderer and ruler of the world. She saluted him with



noble dignity and asked for the services of Hermes, the herald of the celestials, which the great father of the gods granted without further inquiry. Hermes, being called, cordially greeted the fair goddess, and learning

her desire at once put on his winged shoes, thus making himself ready for a descent to the earth.

Journeying together in the golden chariot, Aphrodite, the goddess, addressed him with winning words: "My dear brother," she said, "you know that I never do anything without your advice and I now need your assistance in a special case that causes me much annoyance. A mortal girl, who has dared to be a rival of my dignity and who has thus forfeited to me her life and is now by right my slave, has absconded, and I am unable to find her. I must resort, therefore, to publishing a proclamation, and issue a warrant for her capture." Thereupon Aphrodite handed the herald-god a paper which contained the name of Psyche and a description of her person, naming at the same time the reward which she promised for the arrest of the fugitive.

The proceeding had become superfluous, however, for scarcely had the goddess returned to her home when Psyche approached the gates of the palace and voluntarily delivered herself into the hands of her enemy.

One of Aphrodite's servants, Fashion by name, met Psyche at the door and cried out: "Thou wicked wench! Thou art the very person my mistress is seeking."

Fashion seized the frightened damsel by the hair and dragged her violently into the presence of Aphrodite, who addressed her with haughty irony: "At last you deign to pay your respects to your mother-in-law? I suppose you know, my fair young lady, that if you had not come of your own accord, I should soon have discovered your hiding-place; but now I will treat you according to your deserts."

THE THREE TASKS.

PSYCHE protested that she would willingly and gladly serve the mother of Eros and be in every respect obedient to her behests, saying: "I beg you to try me and receive me as a handmaid in your house, only have mercy on me and desist from hating me."

Aphrodite replied, "We shall see what you can do," and led the humble petitioner out to the barn where she took barley, millet, poppy seed, and every other kind of grain, mixed them well together in an enormous heap and scornfully said: "I will test both your patience and skill. Sort these seeds grain by grain, and unless the task be done before the evening I will deliver you over to my servants, Anxiety and Sorrow, who shall torment and chastise you with due severity."

Then, leaving the frightened girl alone with her formidable task, she shut her up in the great barn.

Psyche was broken-hearted, and looked in silent despair upon the mountain of mixed grain. But before she could consider how she might perform this intricate work, a tiny ant came out, and pitying the distress of the forlorn maiden, whom it knew to be the consort of the mightiest of the gods, summoned the help of its innumerable comrades. A whole tribe of thousands and thousands of these little creatures soon made their appearance and began to sort the heap of seeds. Their work did not last long, and the task was soon completed.

When Aphrodite returned at night-fall, exhilarated by the joyous festivities of a nuptial banquet, decorated with roses, and resplendent with beauty, she saw the marvellous task performed and cried out: "This is not the work of your own hands; for I am sure you could not have finished it without assistance. But I will give you another task."

A piece of coarse bread and a jar of spring-

water was the only meal she granted the beautiful bride of her son, and turning her back upon the frightened girl, the goddess left Psyche alone in the cold barn.

On the next morning Aphrodite reappeared, still showing her irreconcilable hatred.

She pointed to the woods and said: "Do you see the forest beyond the stream? Go out into the wilderness and you will find grazing there a flock of sheep with fleece that shines like gold. I want a tuft of that precious wool. Go then and bring it me. But mind you, the sheep are wild, and when you approach them

they will butt you ferociously and may kill you."

Psyche went out to the stream, not so much to obey the commands of her severe mistress, as to meet death either on the horns of the wether or in the depths of the river.

But when she came to the banks of the stream, the nymph of the reeds, the mother of music, began to speak with the voice of a flute: "O Psyche, do not desecrate the waters of the river by making it your tomb; nor approach the wether or any of the sheep while they are browsing in the woods. They are fierce and

will certainly destroy you. If you will follow my advice, lie down under the shadowy plane-tree; when the sun has descended from the meridian and approached the horizon, go out to the place where the sheep have passed through brush-wood; there, without encountering danger, you may gather the golden tufts from the thorns of the bushes."

Psyche acted according to the advice of the reed-nymph; and when she came home, Venus looked on her with amazement and said: "How did you escape death in the wilderness, and how did you procure the golden tuft from the fierce sheep?"

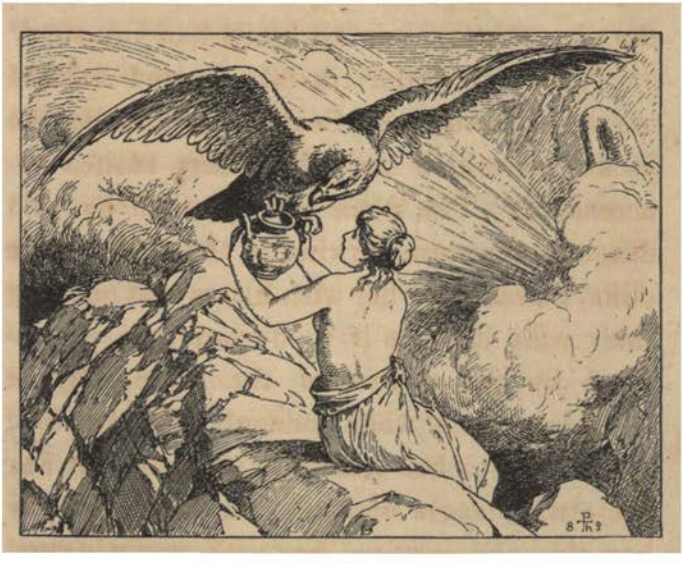
When Psyche told her how easily she had completed her task, the goddess replied: "I know very well that it was not your wisdom that made you succeed, but I will propose a third trial which will probe not only your discretion but also test the courage of your heart."

Psyche looked expectantly at her tormentor, and Aphrodite continued: "Here is a water-urn of purest crystal; take it and ascend the mountain. In the most desolate region of

the wilderness you will find the place where the waters of Cocytus roll, rushing down over the steep precipice to disappear in an unfathomable abyss. Fetch me some water from the fountain-head of the holy river, and I will test thereby whether you are worthy of my son."

Psyche took the crystal urn and hurried out to the source of Cocytus, but found the rock over which its wild waters rushed inaccessible. The place was haunted by wild dragons who were lurking in the clefts of the cliffs, threatening her with hisses and opening their wide jaws as if to devour her. Overcome by the terrors of the place, Psyche burst into tears, when suddenly a mighty bird came down to her from the heavens. It was the strong eagle of Zeus, which hovered by her side and inspired her with new courage. Remembering the good services with which Eros assisted him when sent down to bring up to the throne of Zeus the Phrygian cupbearer, Ganymede, the father of gods was determined to prove his gratitude by hastening to help the wife of the god of love in her distress.

The eagle addressed the despondent wayfarer, saying: "O simple-minded maiden! Do you imagine you can catch one drop from the source of these enchanted waters without being hurled into the deep gorge? The mere



attempt is sure death. But give me the urn, and I shall be glad to fill it for you."

The royal bird of the mighty Zeus took the vessel in his talons and, flying up to the rushing torrent, filled it from the dashing waves of the river, amid the furious attacks of dragons and venomous reptiles. Psyche

was glad to receive the water and quickly returned to Aphrodite whose anger was intensified rather than appeased by the success of her humble daughter-in-law. "You have again completed your task beyond my expectation," said she; "you seem to be a veritable witch who can work miracles; but do not hope to escape thus lightly. There is one more thing in which you must serve me. That, however, I expect, will be the last."

THE REALM OF DEATH.

APHRODITE was mortified at the successful termination of the three tasks set Psyche and said to herself: "I will now go about it in a more determined way and bring this unsatisfactory relation to a definite conclusion. I will so arrange it that the silly creature must perish." So she took a little vase curiously wrought of gold and decorated with inlaid enamel, and said to Psyche: "Take this vessel down to the infernal regions and deliver it to Persephone, my niece, the noble Queen of King Hades, called Pluto, the ruler of the dead. Tell her that I am anxious to receive from her some spray from the fountain of youth; and let it be enough to restore the beauty of seven days; for that much I have lost in ministering unto my sick son. Begone, and make

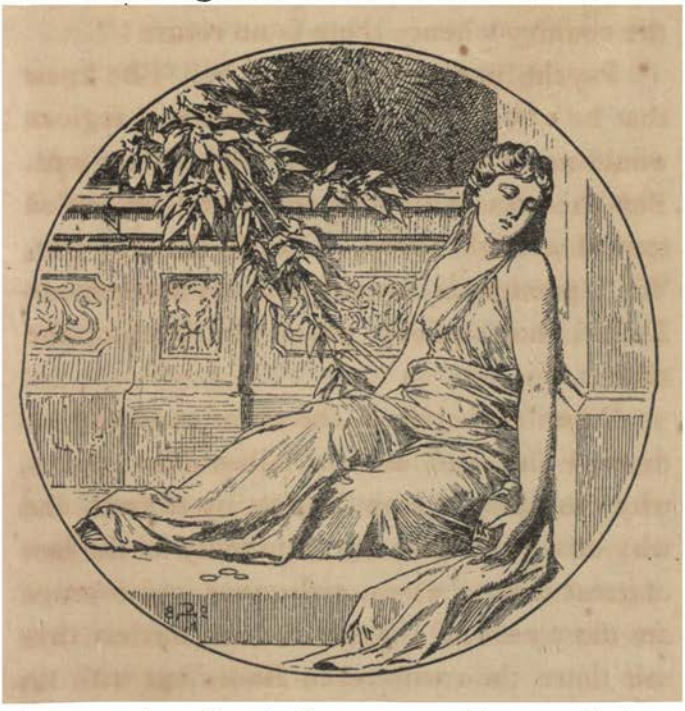
haste. I wish you luck on your journey, and when you have procured the rare gift let your ascent be speedy,"—adding in an undertone —"if ever you can find your way back from the country whence there is no return!"

Psyche now gave up all hope. She knew that he who went down to the infernal regions would never again behold the light of the sun. But she was willing to obey, and proceeded toward a high tower, "For," thought she, "if I precipitate myself from its battlements I shall most quickly reach the land of the shades."

When she arrived, the tower suddenly addressed her and said: "Miserable maiden, why dost thou attempt to destroy thyself, and why dost thou give up so quickly in the face of great danger where endurance and courage are most needed? Truly, if thou hurlest thyself down thou wilt reach Hades but with no chance to return thence to the world of the sun."

Psyche sat down at the entrance of the tower and said: "What shall I do? There is nothing left for me but to die."

The tower replied: "Take courage and listen. Near Lacedæmon, in the mountains, is a gorge within which is a cave known to be the breathing-hole of the Nether World. In



its yawning depth is an untrodden road that will lead thee to the palace of Hades. But thou must not pass by the shades with empty hands. Take along some barley-bread soaked in hydromel, that old-fashioned drink made

of honey and water, and put in thy mouth two coins. When thou hast accomplished a good part of thy journey thou wilt meet a lame ass laden with wood, and a lame driver, who will ask thee to hand him some cords to fasten the burden which has fallen from the ass. But beware of him, and pass him by in silence. It is a device of the rulers of the shades to detain visitors on the way and to prevent their return. Then thou wilt arrive at the river of the dead and must pay Charon his fee for ferrying thee over to the other shore; for avarice is practised even in the realm of death. Let Charon have one of the coins, which thou must allow him to take from thy mouth with his own hands, and keep the other coin for thy return. While thou passest over the sluggish river the corpse of an old man will float on the surface and raise his hand in entreaty to help him into the boat. It is but another device to entangle thee in the affairs of the Nether World. Beware of yielding to any impulse of sympathy, but keep silent and suffer the boat to pass by. Having reached the other shore, thou wilt

find at a little distance three old women weaving, who will request thee to lend them a helping hand. But it is not lawful for thee to touch the web. Pass the weird spinsters by and heed them not. All these and many other apparitions are snares prepared for thee. If thou liftest thy hand, anxious to assist others, thou wilt drop some of thy hydromel bread without which thou wilt be unable to return to the light. There is at the threshold of Persephone's castle a large fierce watch-dog with three heads, who by his barking terrorises the dead, lest any one of them escape. Appease him with a sop of thy hydromel bread, and thou wilt have no difficulty in passing him by. When thou enterest the portal, thou wilt come directly into the presence of Persephone, who will receive thee graciously. She will ask thee to be seated and to partake of a sumptuous banquet; but refuse all her courteous offers, for if thou eatest a morsel of the food of the shades thou must stay with them forever. Therefore tell Persephone that a piece of common rye-bread will be sufficient for thee; this she will give thee, and do thou

eat it. Then is the time to attend to thy errand; hand her the vase, and having received in it the gift for Aphrodite, thou mayest return to the world of light. Thou must again bribe the cruel dog with the rest of thy hydromel bread, pay the ferryman with the coin reserved in thy mouth for the purpose; and having passed back over the river thou wilt, after journeying through the cave, again reach its entrance, where the light of the celestial stars will greet thee. But I warn thee above all things to be very careful with the mysterious vase in thy charge; do not open it, do not even look at it, nor try to explore the treasure that is concealed in it."

Psyche proceeded to Lacedæmon and found the cave in the gorge. Having procured two coins and the barley-bread soaked in hydromel, she ventured into the avenue that leads to the infernal regions. She passed the lame ass with its lame driver, let the ferryman take his fee, turned a deaf ear to the entreaties of the floating corpse, ignored the request of the grey-haired spinsters, assuaged the furious dog with a sop of hydromel bread, and entered

the palace of Hades. Persephone, seated by the side of her awful husband, listened in kindness to the maiden's message and granted the petition. Remembering her own sad fate, the goddess felt compassion and invited her fair guest to eat at the royal table; but Psyche

declined and was contented with a piece of rye-bread for supper. Having received Persephone's gift in her golden vase, the anxious wanderer returned by the way which she had come. A second time filling the jaws of the watch-dog and paying the ferryman with the

coin still left in her mouth, she fled from the infernal regions and reached the world of the living early in the morning, while the stars were still shining in the heavens.

Having overcome all these dangers, con-

trary to her own expectation, she began to ponder on the terrible scenes which she had witnessed. She thought of the vase and its contents, and said to herself: "How foolish I am! Here I hold in my hand spray from the

fountain of youth, the very essence of divine beauty, and I am on my way to deliver it to the woman who hates me and designs my destruction. Why should I not open the vessel and keep the precious gift for myself, which would make me fair to behold and would forever bind my husband to me by the most powerful of ties?"

She lifted the lid, and the essence with its deadly odor poured out in the shape of vapor. It contained no beauty, but proved to be Stygian sleep and forgetfulness, which immediately seized her, and she sank down prostrate on the ground, surrounded by a dense cloud of somnolence.

THE MARRIAGE FEAST.

EROS, in the meantime, had recovered from his illness. A butterfly that came fluttering through the window told him the latest news of the trials and misfortunes of Psyche. Having regained his former strength and recklessness, the youthful god easily outwitted the watchful Hephæstos, escaping from the chamber through a window and hurrying on the wings of love to the earth, to the very entrance of the cave in the gorge that leads to the infernal regions. He saw Psyche stretched on the ground motionless, wrapt in the sleep of death. "It is a kind providence," he said to himself, "that allows me to arrive at the right moment to help the beloved maiden before her sleep changes into death."

With these words Eros took away the Stygian slumber from Psyche's eyelids, and

restored the soporific vapor to the vessel from which it had escaped. Then touching Psyche with the point of one of his arrows, he called her back to life. "Unhappy girl!" he ex-

claimed, "hast thou again become a victim to curiosity? Thou shouldst have known that the fountain of youth is a spring that is fed by the waters of Stygian Lethe. Only the celestial gods can partake of it without suffer-

ing harm, but poor mortal mankind, if ever they taste the drink of oblivion for the sake of its rejuvenescence, must pass constantly through death and birth."

Awakened by a kiss from Eros, Psyche opened her eyes and saw her lover bending over her, anxiously watching her return to life. "Now thou seest," he said to her, smiling at his own good-natured rebuke, "how

fatal thine inquisitiveness might have been. Take the vase and deliver it to Aphrodite; and whilst thou carriest out the demand of my mother I will see to the rest."

He bade farewell to his blooming bride and flew straight up to Olympus to present his cause directly at the throne of Father Zeus.

Big tears filled Psyche's eyes as she saw the beloved god soar upward to heaven. "Will he return? Does he still love me? Has not my beauty suffered through the severe trials to which I have so long been exposed?" She sat down on the bank of the stream that flowed past with almost imperceptible motion and there saw her face reflected as in a clear mirror; and her heart leapt for joy, for indeed she was as beautiful as ever—nay more so, for her charms had ripened into full bloom; she had grown maturer and the expression of her face showed greater depth and comprehension. A feeling of unspeakable happiness came over her; she grew so gay and light-hearted that she felt as if she could rise into the air. Her whole nature seemed

transfigured and on her shoulders appeared two butterfly wings of marvellous iridescence.

* * *

The mighty father of the gods received Eros kindly and kissed the beloved young-

ster, saying: "Thou indeed among the gods payest least respect to the ruler of Olympus, and dost not shrink from involving me in the intrigues of thine earthly relations. But considering that thou art very dear to me, and

that I have nursed thee with my own hand, I will gladly comply with thy wishes."

With a smile of grandfatherly indulgence, the great Zeus ordered Hermes, the herald of

Olympus, to convoke at once an assembly of all the celestials, and, since a high penalty was imposed upon any one that should be delinquent, the assembly hall was soon filled.

When Venus Aphrodite arrived in her

shell chariot drawn by pigeons, she met her son Eros as he rushed down to the earth: "Mother," he said in a reproachful and almost bitter tone; and yet there was at the same time a note of gentle pleading in his sweet voice; "Mother, if you persist in your objection to my marrying Psyche, I am determined to leave high Olympus, to renounce my divinity, and to retire to the place to which your will may banish her. Tartaros in her company is a more welcome abode than Heaven without her."

Aphrodite followed him with her eyes as he descended. She shook her head and said to herself: "The boy is no longer himself; I fear me, I must yield, or there will be some great calamity."

Eros descended to the earth where he found Psyche anxiously awaiting him. He greeted her with a kiss, and she informed her lover that she had delivered the vase and its contents to Aphrodite, but the goddess had received her disdainfully and dismissed her in disgrace, claiming that this time the task had not been completed rightfully and truly, for

the vessel had been opened and the strength of its contents dissipated.

"Do not mind my mother's severity," said Eros; "I have gained a most powerful

ally in my grandfather, the mighty Zeus. Accompany me to Olympus and at the throne of the omnipotent sovereign of all the gods our destiny will be decided."

Psyche leaned on the shoulder of Eros who

placed his arm lovingly round her waist, and both were lifted up to heaven on the wings of divine happiness.

In the meantime the great Zeus, the lofty sovereign of Heaven, took his seat on the throne and addressed the gods assembled in council: "Ye Olympian deities, who are here gathered together in complete number, ye are well acquainted with the flighty character of the youth Eros, the youngest of the gods, who, despite his frivolity, presides over the most important functions of the life of the world. I deem it necessary to bridle his impetuosity and to restrain his impulsive nature. It will be best for him, for the gods, and for the welfare of the whole world, if he forthwith assume the responsibility of marriage. If he has a wife and the cares and worries of a household, he will become sober and sedate;" and turning to Aphrodite, Zeus said: "Since he has made his choice and pledged his troth to a maiden that pleases his fancy, we ordain that his marriage be recognised as legal and his bride accepted in the circle of the Olympians as our equal. The

mother of the groom has had cause to be dissatisfied with the choice of Eros, but I advise her to be lenient with her daughter-in-law, Psyche, who, though a mortal maiden, has proved herself worthy of her son's love and of kinship with the gods."

Aphrodite was at first inclined to sulk, and ventured to raise objections; but when she saw that the mighty brow of the great father of the Olympians became clouded with ire, she relented and granted that Psyche was worthy of her son's hand. Then the face of Zeus brightened again, and all the gods were pleased with his proposition. Apollo moved to celebrate the marriage of the young couple at once in the banquet hall of high Olympus. He was seconded by Bacchus; and the motion was carried when Eros in company with Psyche entered the assemblage. The young bride received the congratulations of the Olympians, and Zeus himself presented to her a bowl of nectar from which Psyche drank the bliss of immortality.

The gods sat down to the banquet in the order of their dignity. Eros and Psyche, how-

ever, sat nearest to Zeus, the great father of the gods, and were now legally and solemnly for ever and aye joined in holy wedlock. Ganymede acted as cup-bearer to the mighty sovereign of Olympus, and Bacchus supplied the rest of the company with drink.

After the banquet the merry-making was continued far into the night. The Seasons suffused the scene with roseate hue; Apollo sang and played the lyre. The Muses played a grand symphony, Aphrodite danced before the gods and contrary to all expectation

showed herself very gracious to the bride. Satyrs played the flute.

Thus ended the sorrows of Psyche, and her happiness was complete when at the appointed time she bore her husband a child, a little daughter, sweet and cunning and bright. When she smiled, her eyes beamed like sunshine, and her parents called her "Joy."

No one of the gods, and least of all Venus Aphrodite, ever found cause to regret that

Psyche had been admitted to the circle of the celestials. Very soon it seemed as if she had been living in Olympus from time immemorial, and whenever she happened to be absent her happy face was sure to be missed. Since her arrival heaven seemed more radiant than before.

The inhabitants of the earth rejoiced at the honors of the earth-born maiden. In Psyche the divinity of the human soul had

found official recognition among the Olympians. Since thus the human had been deified, and since thereby the divine had revealed itself as the truly human, mankind seemed more human and the gods more divine than ever.

* * *

The human soul is prone to go astray, but if it remains faithful to its ideals, firm amid the temptations and vicissitudes of fate, and courageous even in the terrors of hell and under the shadows of death, it will at last find the path that leads unto life, and it will find it in Love.

Love moves the universe. As attraction, Love sways the molar masses of gravitating bodies; as affinity, Love joins atoms into higher combinations; but Love reaches perfection only when it is mated with the human soul; for then Love becomes conscious and learns to know its own nature. In the human soul, however, Love is confronted with longing, with suffering, and with parting. It passes through trials and tribulations, but now at last Love finds bliss in otherness,

satisfaction in self-surrender, restitution to life in the sacrifice of its own being, and immortality in death.

Death is the problem of life, but Love is its solution.

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